

Delaware Issues Guidance for Child Care Providers on Coronavirus

SMYRNA (March 14, 2020) – The State of Delaware issued guidance today to assist non-public school child care facilities with their response to the global outbreak of respiratory coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19).

Based on advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Delaware Division of Public Health does not recommend closing non-public school child care settings at this time. The data available from 74,000 cases that occurred in China, show that only 2 percent of individuals under 19 years of age tested positive for COVID-19.

“Children appear to be less vulnerable to this virus and based upon the science we have now, it does not indicate that closing child care facilities will help in reducing the spread of COVID-19,” said Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician. “Child care centers are controlled environments generally with small classroom sizes. Providers know who is coming in and out, who is sick, and are able to restrict access to help reduce risk. We are constantly evaluating information, but right now, parents should continue sending their children to child care to help provide structure.”

Suggested preventive measures that child care facilities should include:

- Increase handwashing procedures throughout the day for staff and children using soap and water and scrubbing vigorously for at least 20 seconds.
- Remind adults and children to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Strictly enforce the child care facility's illness policy for both children and staff.
- Separate sick students and adults from others until they can go home.
- Rigorously implement cleaning for toys and surfaces.
- Remove and sanitize mouthed toys immediately.
- Regularly launder soft items such as washable plush toys, bedding, and clothing.

More information on guidance for child care facilities is available online at the CDC website.

"While families can typically make do for a day or two when schools are closed, longer closures make it harder to find child care," said Ray Fitzgerald, Director of DHSS' Division of Social Services. "We know parents are concerned about their employment and keeping non-public school child care open helps to reduce that worry."

Testing for coronavirus disease is not recommended for individuals who do not have any symptoms of illness. For individuals who have symptoms of illness (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) testing is being run at both the Delaware Public Health Lab as well as private labs such as LabCorp. Medical providers should evaluate patients and rule out other causes of illness first before recommending testing for COVID-19.

While testing for the disease at the Public Health Lab requires DPH approval, providers do not need DPH approval to submit test samples to private labs. With the addition of commercial lab testing now available, Delaware has enough capacity to accommodate its current testing needs. Providers only need to collect nose swabs as they would for flu to submit samples for testing. Commercial labs are required to report testing and results to DPH.

Delawareans with questions about COVID-19 or their exposure

risk can call the Division of Public Health's Coronavirus Call Center at 1-866-408-1899, or 711 for individuals who are hearing impaired, from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, or email DPHCall@delaware.gov. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For more information, visit de.gov/coronavirus.